

*Work Zone Safety Task Force
Meeting Minutes February 23, 2006
Olympic Region Conference Room*

Welcome

Randy Hain, Olympic Region Administrator, welcomed the group and mentioned some safety issues regarding the room and the building. Randy shared two thoughts with the group as to why the WZSTF is so important: (1) Doug MacDonald is an advocate of safety and WZSTF focuses on Secretary MacDonald's vision for WSDOT; and (2) the WZSTF is getting "the word" out to the people exposed to the daily risk of maintenance and construction. Sue Babic says that safety is expensive and wanted to know if administration is prepared to provide equipment and training. Randy reiterated that executive staff is very supportive but getting the funding is not always easy.

Introductions

Julia Mizuhata of Northwest Region is a new representative to the WZSTF, she is replacing Dawn Macintosh. Each of the attendees introduced his or her self to the attending guests, Trooper Cartwright from Tacoma, and Dave Beck, Wilder Construction Traffic Control Supervisor. Kevin talked about a tour he took of the Sound Transit Project in Seattle. He talked about their excellent safety record and the fact that visitors have a safety orientation before going on site. The project is divided into zones, and each zone has an entry address that is given to the local fire department and the WSP so any emergency within a particular zone can be responded to immediately.

Message from the Chief

John Batiste, Chief of the Washington State Patrol, was one of the charter members of the WZSTF and fully stands behind the effort of WSDOT and WSP to keep people in work zones safe. Chief Batiste supports the fact that troopers are now actively patrolling work zones instead of just being present.

New Work Zone Rule

FHWA has updated its regulation on work zone safety and mobility to address corridor, network and regional issues while planning and designing road projects. Defined by three primary components – policy level provisions, state level processes, and project level procedures – the new rule emphasizes partnerships between FHWA and state DOTs. Frank pointed out that many of the FHWA requirements WSDOT is already doing, but there are some areas we need to work on before the November 2007 implementation date. One such criterion is creating a Transportation Management Plan which encompasses the project from development to construction and includes temporary traffic control strategies, transportation operations and public information strategies. The new rule encourages innovative thinking in work zone planning, design and management. There is the expectation that WSDOT headquarters will pull the information together and get it into the appropriate manuals.

Region Roundtable

Chris Christopher briefly talked about the seven goals of the Work Zone Safety Task Force and pointed out that since the inception of the WZSTF, that WSDOT fatalities have dropped from an average of one per year to less than one in four years.

Wilder Construction – Kathleen St John (previously Kathleen Salamon) said that with construction slow, they are focusing on training, their emphasis is to be safe but keep traffic moving. They also focus on behavior since 90% of accidents are behavior based, and talk about personal protection, placement of workers, and the fact that inspectors and sub contractors fail to use the correct safety personal equipment more often than employees. Kathleen also talked about their Stop Program; Wilder is working hard to use this program as an education and safety tool and not a negative or punitive program. Wilder follows up when there is an accident, but gives praise when safety is being done right.

Olympic Region – Sue Babic says they are focusing on hands-on training. They have developed safety awareness training and have been trying to get this out to more people to improve safety in work zones. This goes along with the Maintenance Traffic Control Operations mandatory training. Sue asked about funding for equipment, Kevin said that if the equipment is not available to do a job safely, then the job won't be done. Kathy Hatcher says that the snow, ice and trees have kept her crew busy. She mentioned that with emphasis in safety committees, their region is now meeting L & I requirements. Kathy feels that when the crews initiate safety, they feel more ownership in the program. Amy Revis talked about the concentration of drinking establishments along a section of SR7 that is causing safety concerns when affected drivers harass work zone crews and drive erratically, night time is the worst. The Washington State Liquor Board and the WSP are working on the issue. Kevin said there is 5-5-5 money left if they need monetary assistance. Steve Haapala talked about working with Local Programs to get the setting of work zones up to par with the new MUTCD adaptation, especially in regard to speed zones, signing, traffic control and flagging. Steve pointed out that traffic control needs to be written into the cost of the project at the beginning, not at the end or as an after thought.

North Central Region – Kirk Berg talked about two relatively small projects, in both instances the roads were closed and the traffic detoured. The region is also looking at more innovative ways to maintain traffic flow such as moving people into one lane instead of cars coming to a complete stop, and having more night work. Kirk also talked about the fatality on Stevens Pass when a WSDOT worker died of heart failure. He stressed the importance of workers having current insurance and wills to spare family members any more pain than they are already going through. Recently a maintenance worker's vehicle was side swiped, the WSDOT worker was not hurt, but the driver of the other vehicle was killed, the driver was driving under the influence. Kirk says NC Region encourages WSDOT workers to meet with contractors to conduct mutual safety meetings.

Easter Region – Ralph Robertson says that all the ITS work so far on I-90 has been night work, the new route being graded is both day and night work. A ten foot fiberglass rod with a flag has been installed on contractor vehicles in order to make them more visible to the large earth movers. When I-90 is repaired this summer, the streets of Spokane will become more congested so the state is funding signal retiming and some signing to encourage traffic flow. A lot of outreach hopefully will help as well. Seven cameras will be installed in the work zones and monitored by the TMC to watch for any problems. Both permanent and portable VMS will be available as will HAR. Regular meetings are being held with businesses so they know which roads are closed and when.

Captain Bill Hilton, WSP District 1 Commander from Tacoma, said he really appreciates the close working relationship with WSDOT. He also praised the Incident Response teams. He encourages workers in construction and maintenance zones to look out for themselves and the safety of others. A trooper can arrest up to 15 drunk or otherwise impaired drivers a day, and it is easy for a trooper, like a work zone crew, to become complacent working close to traffic.

Southwest Region – Chris Tams talked about the emergency slide zones making up the majority of work right now. He said their safety officer recently reminded everyone of the importance of having the right safety gear in every vehicle. Chris said that the Rush Road project on I-5 near Chehalis will cause the freeway lanes to be closed because of the girder over the road. He also talked about the City of Vancouver map being on the WSDOT web page so the public can see city traffic congestion.

Northwest Region – Phil Fordyce said the statistics they have looked at show that fatalities in work zones are up. Recently a drunk driver in a work zone hit a trooper's car, the trooper was alright, but the driver was thrown from the car and killed. Since the Washington State Ferries have pulled WSP troopers off regular duty, there are fewer troopers available for work zone assistance and this is a concern with the construction season approaching. Phil talked about innovative traffic control on the SR 20 slide area. Proper signing and striping on the Federal Way HOV project has been hindered by the weather. The Everett to Lynnwood project has had large increases in labor and traffic control and all work is being done at night. Phil has a concern over the way accidents are reported by WSP, the CAD/CARS system may not indicate if an accident has occurred in a work zone. Julia Mizuhata sees a new culture of contractor and WSDOT doing safety reviews together and building rapport. Julia believes there is a need to educate people on how to enter and exit a work zone and how to move around in one safely. She stressed designers need to know what to look for when creating work zone traffic control. Julia also agrees that the lack of WSP troopers in work zones this year will affect how work zones are planned.

South Central Region – Rick Gifford said that the weather in the Tri Cities and Yakima has prevented permanent striping on projects; he also talked about the region gearing up for spring and a work zone position to be filled. On the safety front they have had four snow plows hit this year, once by an 18 wheeler, luckily no one has been hurt. Tom Lenberg explained safety prevention plans are critical, and since each project is different it's important for input from the field. Tom said they let the WSP know each day about work zone locations, detailed down to a vehicle check list.

State Traffic Engineer – Ted Trepanier talked about getting ITS in place before the bulk of the construction begins in order to better manage traffic flow, typically it is finished up last. ITS needs to be its own online project, before construction begins. Information to the public is also important in the big picture, so that drivers can choose alternate routes.

Pavement Marking Removal

Cathy Nicholas, Federal Highway Administration representative, said a team has been studying the pavement marking removal procedures process. The team has looked at methods of stripe removal, including sand and hydro blasting as well as grinding. The

NW Region conducted a successful test of the hydro blasting and California's tests are also being reviewed. Cathy expects to have the results by June or July; a matrix may be created to show the effects of different methods and recommendations will be offered.

Work Zone Safety Task Force Subcommittees

Safety/New Products Subcommittee – Marty showed balloon lighting, this is a heavy duty air-filled device used for glare free night time illumination in all weather, it works off a generator. Kathleen St John said they would like to use them on more night paving projects since they provide better overall lighting but they are very expensive. Marty also told the group he's been looking for a better portable sign stand, capable of holding both five and seven foot speed limit signs, that would pass crash tests. With the new regulations, one plaque signs fit on temporary sign stands. No stand could be found to legally hold two aluminum signs one under the other. Marty and Frank will address this issue at ATSSA to see what other states are using.

Technical Subcommittee – Frank talked about the twelve items the group is working on: updating the Traffic Control Guidelines, Clear Zone vs. Safety Zone; State Patrol in Work Zone Guidance; Litter Control Guidelines Review; Work Zone Reviews; Traffic Control Plans on Roundabouts; Border Crossing Traffic Control; Work Zone Design Training; adding lessons learned to the Work Zone Webpage; Traffic Control Plan Library; Policy for crews working over live traffic; and Implementation of ITS items such as dynamic lane merge.

ADIEUM Attenuators

Dick Albin of the Design Office is in the process of revising the *Design Manual* to restrict the use of ADIEUM Attenuators to temporary work zones where the posted speed limit is 45 mph or less, pending FHWA approval. The ADIEUM attenuators have been the primary device for the last ten years, Dick has asked for the regions to give him feedback on their performance. Once the FHWA approves the restriction, the manual will be revised and information will be posted on the WSDOT website.

Eliminating Ticket Takers on Pavers

Ralph Robertson said there was originally some hesitancy in the project office when the procedure to reduce ticket taker exposure was suggested, but everyone was happy with the process after using it. A HMA (Hot Mix Asphalt) Delivery sheet was developed and used, and considered a good tool. On both jobs, the sheet was reconciled each day with the tickets provided by the contractor. The HMA Delivery sheet was also used to record temperatures, yields, variations, down times for equipment and other important information. Ralph said that while there is opportunity for improvement, Eastern Region will use this method vs. the traditional method whenever possible, since there were some cost savings and ticket taker exposure was reduced.

Statewide and Region wide Work Zone Review Process

The 2005 Work Zone Review report was carefully developed with the Regions and took about three months to create. It appears to be an improvement over years past due to more detail and attention to design issues. Previously, many of the issues were repetitive from year to year which included a lack of attention to detail and housekeeping issues. This year the reviewers saw more issues related to implement action of specifications in the field and some inadequate plans, specifications and estimate processes. The focus

was on implementing solutions to these issues at the region level through more awareness, training, emphasis, etc. in an effort to stop the reoccurring items and addressing issues before they occur in the field. HQ is working to ensure that all the needed specifications and guidance is available to assist the regions. Phil Fordyce pointed out that the review comments have to be important to the project engineer and their supervisors; this will be a topic at the next project engineer meeting. Contractors should be included as well. The Project Management Plan can address risks and changes as well as lessons learned. The regions are encouraged to be more proactive and do their own reviews as well; it raises overall awareness to accident prevention, worker safety and compliance to standards. Kathleen suggested WSDOT share these reports with the contractors. Traffic control supervisor duties and related issues are supposed to be tied into the implementation of the plan, the contractor is supposed to be responsible for the traffic control supervisor. The reviewers also noted that the design process, including traffic control plans, should be more thoroughly evaluated earlier in the project development process.

Standard Plans for Work Zone Traffic Control

Larry Hinson, HQ Design Standards Manager, said there are some simple projects WSDOT could use a standard work zone traffic control plan for. The Design Office is creating a plan sheet library where standard plans will be available in plans sheet format to download, and to use as is or modify.

Changing the WSDOT Safety Culture

The Safety and Health Advisory Committee (SHAC) is discussing a potential Maintenance Safety Program. It will be an outline of what a comprehensive safety program should look like. Ideally the model will be used by other programs in the department in order to change the culture, by looking at the preventables and reducing accidents. The recommended approach was broken down into thirteen steps, from developing clear, consistent, and comprehensive data; to establishing true costs of accidents/incidents including medical and lost work time; to including safety goals in annual performance evaluations. Specific safety tips need to be in place for each project, if a guardrail is being replaced, have a check off list with details. This movement is in part data driven; the cost of incidents is \$2 – \$4M a year. The goal is zero accidents. The group agreed that consistency across the state is important, and the employees need to know that repeat offenders will be removed from the job. Kevin asked that two construction project engineer representatives join the SHAC.

Work Zone Safety Control Guidelines (M54-44)

The 2006 version came out in January, 3000 copies were distributed. There were a few technical changes, the rest were corrections and responses to emails. A summary sheet was included which lists what the changes are.

Next Meetings

June 21, North Central Region will host the next WZSTF. In September the meeting will be in Southwest Region.